

## Message Text

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ACTION SCCT-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 NEA-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 USSS-00 SY-04 DRC-01 SAM-01

EB-11 FAA-00 DOTE-00 IO-14 SSO-00 /159 W

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R 271253Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1562

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2113

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SY

SUBJ: JAPANESE RED ARMY TERRORISTS

REF: DAMASCUS 2011 AND 2028

1. SUMMARY. SHIHABI ASSERTS JAPANESE RED ARMY TERRORISTS WERE FROM MOMENT THEIR ARRIVAL IN SYRIA UNDER SARG CUSTODY AND NOT THAT OF ANY PALESTINIAN GROUP. HE CONFIRMED TERRORISTS HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO LAND HERE ONLY IN RESPONSE TO HUMANITARIAN PLEAS OF FRENCH AND DUTCH GOVERNMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. COS SHIHABI CONFIRMED TO AMBASSADOR EVENING SEPTEMBER 25 THAT FROM MOMENT THEIR ARRIVAL IN SYRIA SEPTEMBER 18 ABOARD THE AIR FRANCE 707, THE FOUR JAPANESE RED ARMY TERRORISTS HAVE BEEN UNDER SARG CUSTODY. SHIHABI NOTED THAT JAPANESE REMAINED IN

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CUSTODY. SHIHABI NOTED THAT JAPANESE REMAINED IN

SYRIA AT LEAST UNTIL THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 24, THE LAST TIME HE HAD CHECKED ON THE GROUP PRIOR TO HIS OWN TRAVELS AWAY FROM DAMASCUS. AMBASSADOR RECALLED FLAT ASSERTION BY NEWS MEDIA THAT JAPANESE HAD BEEN IN THE HANDS OF ONE OF THE PALESTINIAN GROUPS (PFLP OR PLO DEPENDING ON PAPER INVOLVED). SHIHABI ANSWERED THAT PFLP HAD NOT EVEN BEEN PRESENT AT THE AIRPORT; A REP FROM AL FATAH OBSERVED THE GROUP'S ARRIVAL BUT WITHDREW FROM THE AIRPORT WHEN SYRIANS TOLD HIM THAT THE JAPANESE HAD PROPOSED THAT THEY BE UNDER PALESTINIAN CUSTODY. AL FATAH REP DECLINED INVOLVEMENT STATING HIS ORGANIZATION HAD NO TIES WITH RED ARMY.

3. SYRIAN AUTHORITIES HAD PROMISED THE JAPANESE ONLY THAT THEY WOULD BE PROTECTED WHILE IN SYRIA AND WOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEPART FOR DESTINATION OF THEIR CHOICE. SHIHABI AFFIRMED THEY HAD BEEN RECEIVED IN SYRIA ONLY IN RESPONSE REQUEST BY FRENCH AND DUTCH GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED FOR SAFETY OF CREW AND PLANE.

4. AMBASSADOR FURNISHED SHIHABI WITH BIO MATERIAL ORIGINATING WITH JAPANESE POLICE ON TWO OF THE TERRORISTS (TOKYO 12305). HE READ THIS INFO WITH INTEREST AND APPEARED SURPRISED BY INDICATIONS THAT RED ARMY HAD PRESENCE IN BEIRUT. OBSERVED THAT SYRIA KNEW LITTLE ABOUT RED ARMY AND WOULD APPRECIATE FURTHER BACKGROUND. SHIHABI NOTED THAT RED ARMY LINKUP WITH PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN ELEMENTS WAS ELOQUENT OF LEVEL OF DESPERATION PREVAILING AMONG SOME ELEMENTS IN PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. (IN THIS CONNECTION SHIHABI COMMENTED HE BELIEVED UNGA DEBATE OF PALESTINIAN ITEM WAS A HEALTHY STEP WITH PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES AIRING PALESTINIAN GRIEVANCES IN THE UN SETTING.)

5. COMMENT: SHIHABI'S STATEMENT THAT JAPANESE RED ARMY TERRORISTS WERE FROM THEIR ARRIVAL IN SYRIA IN SARG CUSTODY CONFIRMS EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS SENT DEPARTMENT IN REFTELS.  
MURPHY

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